

City of South Bend
Administration & Finance Policy Manual



5.4 Use of e-Mail Policy

Effective: May 1, 2010

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- Purpose:** This policy defines the use of the e-Mail system of the City of South Bend.
- Scope:** This statement applies to all employees of all governmental units, enterprise operations, and operations of the City of South Bend.
- Responsibility:** This policy is the responsibility of the Controller of the City of South Bend. Changes or revisions to this policy are affected only with the consent and approval of the Controller.
- Effective Date:** This policy is effective May 1, 2010.
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1.0 Policy Statement

Use of the email system of the City of South Bend is intended solely for official City business.

Employees are not authorized to use the city e-mail system or employee e-mail address for personal messages. Employee use of the city e-mail system or employee e-mail address for personal use may subject the employee to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination.

2.0 Privacy Matters

Email messages, including attachments, sent and received on City equipment are the property of the City. The City reserves the right to access, monitor, read, and/or copy email messages at any time, for any reason. Employees should not expect privacy for any email sent using City equipment, including messages that you consider to be personal, or labeled with a designation such as "Personal" or "Private."

3.0 Employee Conduct Policy

All City policies and rules of conduct apply to employee use of the email system. The email system may not be used to send harassing or discriminatory messages, including messages with explicit sexual content or pornographic images; to send threatening messages; or to reveal City confidential information. Employees in violation of this statement may be subject to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination.

4.0 Solicitation

Employees may not use the email system to solicit others to patronize an outside business or to support an outside organization, a political candidate or cause, or a religious cause.

City of South Bend
Administration & Finance Policy Manual

5.0 Use of Personal Email Accounts

Employees may not use their private & personal email accounts to transact City business. This includes storing work-related documents and email messages in a personal email account, sending work to a personal email account, engaging in work-related communications (with customers, clients, or co-workers), using a personal email account, or "bouncing" messages from an employees City email to a personal email when the employee is out of the office.

Use of private email for City business may create a security exposure, expose confidential City information, and compromise the City's legal record-keeping obligations.

Employees required to work offsite where the use of a private email address may be necessary must contact the IT department prior to determine the proper protocol necessary to safely transmit and protect City information.

It is the responsibility of the employee to initiate the contact with information technology.

6.0 Access to Personal Email xxxxxxx

Accessing your personal email account from work creates security risks for the City's computer system and network. Therefore, employees may not use City equipment to access their personal email accounts. The City's security software blocks access to many Web-based email sites. The fact that you can access a Web-based email site does not mean that you are free to check personal email using the City's equipment, however.

7.0 Professional Tone and Content

Employees are expected to exercise discretion in using electronic communications equipment. When you send email using the City's equipment, you are representing the City. Make sure that messages are professional and appropriate, in tone and content. Remember, although email may seem like a private conversation, email can be printed, saved, and forwarded to unintended recipients.

8.0 Guidelines for Email Writing

1. Always spell-check or proofread your email messages. Email is official City correspondence. Spelling errors in email are all too common, and they look sloppy and unprofessional.

2. Use lowercase and capital letters in the same way that you would in a letter. Using all capital letters is the email equivalent of shouting at someone -- and it can be hard on the eyes. Failing to use capital letters at all (to begin a sentence or formal noun) can confuse readers and seem overly cute. Unless you are writing poetry, use standard capitalization.

3. Remember your audience. Although email encourages informal communication, that might not be the most appropriate style to use if you are addressing the CEO of an important customer. And, remember that your email can be forwarded to unintended recipients, some of whom may not appreciate joking comments or informalities.

4. Don't use email for confidential matters. Again, remember the unintended recipient. Your email might be forwarded to someone you didn't anticipate or might be sitting at a printer for all to see. If you need to have a confidential discussion, do it in person or over the phone.

City of South Bend
Administration & Finance Policy Manual

5. Always think before you send. Resist the urge to respond in anger, to "flame" your recipient, or to get emotional. Although email gives you the opportunity to respond immediately, you don't have to take it.

6. Don't leave the subject line blank. Always include a brief description, so readers will know what your email is about at a glance. This makes it easier for all of us to manage our email -- and makes it more likely that you will receive a response to your message.

7. Don't overuse the "urgent" tag. Mark a message as urgent only if it is truly important and must be answered right away.

9.0 Email Security

To avoid email viruses and other threats, employees should not open email attachments from people and businesses they don't recognize, particularly if the email appears to have been forwarded multiple times or has a nonexistent or peculiar subject heading. Even if you know the sender, do not open an email attachment that has a strange name or is not referenced in the body of the email -- it may have been transmitted automatically, without the sender's knowledge.

If you believe your computer has been infected by a virus, worm, or other security threat to the City's system, you must inform the IT department immediately.

Employees also may not share their email passwords with anyone, including coworkers or family members. Revealing passwords to the City's email system could allow an outsider to access the City's network.

10.0 Retaining and Deleting Email Messages

Because email messages are electronic records, all messages are retained for compliance purposes and could be requested for legal reasons.

Because of the large volume of emails our City sends and receives each day, we discourage employees from storing large numbers of email messages in their "In-Box" Please make a regular practice of deleting email messages once you have read and/or responded to them.